

Our Christian Heritage

(With the Jewish connection)

by Jean Eason

July, 2019

Dedication

I dedicate this book primarily to my grandchildren and their spouses (including our “adopted” granddaughter – not legally but through love), praying that you will always put God first, family second and job third in your life. I pray you will always take time to read the Bible, pray and spend time with your family and friends. I pray you will remember that “love” covers all things and trust God in all things. May you live a fulfilled life – obeying God the best you can because He knows what’s best and following His ways bring joy and peace. To my children and friends who might read this – just think about how much time I spent on it – ha!!!! I’m not going through a book publisher like my other two books because I only need a few copies of this one. Even though this is only for family and friends – it’s not meant to be a “warm and fuzzy” book – instead – it’s more of a study, something to ponder and think about God’s plan for you and think about where you fit into it. Remember – I don’t claim to be a scholar and no doubt have made mistakes in this but at the age of 93 – I did the best I could. I feel the Lord gave me a passion to do this (maybe it’s mostly for me). You might not be interested in reading it now – if not please put it on your bookshelf and read it someday - I love all of you dearly and look forward to living with you forever in God’s kingdom!!!!

Preface

When I started researching our Christian heritage I felt like I had a huge puzzle to work. If you work puzzles like I do, you form the outer edges first. I have the pieces put together to form the 4 square outer edge – a few pieces that fit together in the middle – and patches here and there in the middle of the square. Perhaps it will come together when I finish this study. The more I know about the Bible – the more I realize how much I *don't* know!!! And along the way I have so many questions! Surely I'm a direct descendant of Thomas because I have so many questions and "wondering doubts."

The Bible says God talked to Adam in the garden. I wonder how much He told Adam about His creation and what their relationship was like. I can't begin to imagine a perfect garden with the first human being and the glory of God's presence covering it, can you?!!!! Imagine looking at a newly formed animal and naming it – I wonder what we would have called them. And if that wasn't enough – to be presented a beautiful woman – another human being!!

Adam lived close to 1000 years – I wonder how many children he had and how many descendants. And since his first two sons brought sacrifices – God must have told the couple this was necessary to cover sins. As Adam's family multiplied – did God speak to them and give instructions and explain what was good and evil and did Adam pass down God's values to his family? Individuals are spoken of as being righteous – Enoch, for example - how did they know what was good and evil? I assume Adam and Eve taught them.

I wonder how many people were on earth when Adam died and I don't suppose they were called a country yet – what laws did they follow and how were they punished. See? I told you I had lots of questions!!! I'm confident many will be answered in this study. I wish you could be here with me and help put the puzzle together.

Gen 5:1 speaks of the recorded genealogy records. According to commentaries this was around 3774 B.C. Seth, the son of Adam lived to be 912 years old!! He was the father of Enosh, (the one who did not experience death because God took him) – he's the first person after Adam that the Bible mentions walking with God. He was only a couple of generations from Adam. This tells me Adam's witness of God was passed down through the generations. Enosh was the father of Methuselah who is noted for living the longest, 969 years. How many times have we heard the expression "he's as old as Methuselah"!!!! Old timers knew their Bible!!!

Methuselah was the father of Lameck who was the father of a very famous person – NOAH, who was born around 2904 BC. Now I have a few pieces of the puzzle put together from Adam to Noah and I've seen how many times God spoke directly to some. He was grieved that mankind became so wicked and most people know about the flood, and he found Noah righteous (Gen 6:7, 8). What made him that way? He's bound to have heard the story from family only a few generations from Adam.

When people choose to be righteous God sees and approves (Gen. 7:1). Noah chose *not* to be wicked like the others and instead, obeyed God when He spoke directly to Him giving instructions to build the ark. And just think – that ark has been duplicated through the ministry of "Answers in Genesis" and people are visiting it from all over the world! God has seen that His word will be made known in spite of all the opposition it's had through the ages. God made an everlasting covenant with Noah never to flood the whole earth again (Gen 9:16) and to this day He has kept His promise. God put the rainbow in the sky for us to be reminded of this promise.

Back to the genealogy – Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham and Japeth. And guess who the descendant of Shem is! Abraham – the father of the Jews and that's where my study begins.

So why am I writing this? I want to see the whole puzzle put in place before I leave here. I want to have a better understanding of how God communicated with His people; how He made covenants with His chosen ones through the ages. And finally to recognize the importance of the Redeemer He sent to earth to institute the New Covenant. How He reached out to the whole world to offer eternal life to those who would embrace the gospel. Yes, we have a unique Christian heritage that will continue throughout eternity. What a glorious Day that will be!!!!

How would I go about creating a study from scratch? It's interesting as you follow God how He will give passions for certain things and equip us to bring it about. A few years ago I was eager to read the words God verbally spoke in the Old Testament. I actually typed all the verses (that's before I knew I could find them on the web and copy them). Of course some books in the Bible are all His words so I only typed the headings of each section in those books. Then I separated the verses into categories of promises, judgment, punishment, etc. This was a lot of work but I learned so much about God's character. I'm going to use some of that work by sharing the verses where God made the promises regarding the *everlasting* covenant made with Abraham and his descendants. I will be using a lot of Scriptures as I took note of them from Genesis to Revelation. I wish I was a scholar and could write this in a scholarly fashion but I'm not and quite frankly I don't even

know why I'm taking the time at age 93 to do this!!! But the Lord gave me a passion for it – maybe it's just for me but if you're reading it – I hope you get something from it. I really enjoy doing this!!!!

Recently, when I became interested in digging out some facts about Israel, I was actually jotting down notes with no intention of typing them into this document – but here I am – doing just that!! So – for whatever purpose I'm doing this - for whoever might read it – please bear with me for any inconsistencies because as I try to put this together and make sense – sometimes I get confused!!! I will start in Genesis and go straight through the Bible.

As I began my study I noticed how many times God repeated His promise to the Israelites and I realized He had a plan that he's bound to carry out into our eternal world where Jesus will rule the new heavens and new earth forever!!! And it causes me to be eternally grateful that He chose to graft the Gentiles (all people from all nations – born again believers) into the new covenant made with Israel and Judah (Jer. 31:31). Just think, we will inherit this world (more on this later)!!! The fun of doing Christian genealogy is recognizing our roots – the foundation from which we build our godly character that comes from the King of kings making this possible when He came into the earth to show us the glory of His Father who sent Him. What a glorious day it will be when we see Him face to face – how wonderful it is to know that when we die – we will know as we are known (I Cor 13:12).

OUR CHRISTIAN ROOTS

(Note: All Scriptures are taken from the KJ, NKJ and NIV Bibles. In order to emphasize some words, I italicized and underlined.)

When I made a genealogy notebook for our children and other members of the family, I found so many interesting things while doing the research. We've gone back as far as the 1700's in our family history but when searching for our Christian roots we can go all the way to the beginning of biblical genealogy recorded in the Bible. When we hear the term "Christian" we often think "Christ" – but when you think of His earthly birth when He became fully man and fully God we can read about His earthly genealogy (that is, the family he was born into) as well. Luke's account goes all the way back to God being the Father. It seems God has always been very meticulous with family genealogies – you can read it over and over in the Old Testament and again when naming the generations of Mary and Joseph in the New Testament (Matt. 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-37). Matthew begins with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob's son Judah – the lineage of Joseph, Mary's husband.

Biblical history begins with Adam and Eve and continues through the flood where only eight people made it through and survived. The genealogy continues naming Noah's three sons and, since I'm focusing on the Jewish lineage, I'm naming only one son, *Shem*, because *Abraham* (the first one called "Hebrew") is Shem's descendent. I enjoy learning about origins so I did a little research about this and found some information written by Rochel Chein. In a past article, he provided some good information about where the name "Hebrew" and "Jew" came from:

"Shem became a prophet of God and lived six hundred years, serving God as a priest. In the time of Abraham, who was the ninth generation in direct line of descent from Shem, Shem was famous under the name of Malkitzedek, the "just King," who brought offerings to God. He lived to see the eleventh generation of his descendants of (Jacob). Together, with his worthy great-grandson Eber, he taught and spread faith in God and His commands in a school which was known as the Academy of Shem and Eber. The word "Hebrew" came from the name Eber (Gen 10:24). Eber was the great grandson of Shem and an ancestor of Abraham. The nation of the Jewish people originated from the Israelites and Hebrews of historical Israel and Judah. Jewish ethnicity, nationhood, and religion are strongly interrelated, as Judaism is the traditional faith of the Jewish people."

The term "Jew" is derived from the name of Jacob's fourth son, Judah. The word "Jew" came from the Hebrew word "Yehudi" which means "from the kingdom of Judah." He is named in the genealogy of Matthew. On his deathbed, Jacob assigned Judah the role of leader and king (Gen. 49:9, 10) – a prophecy that was fulfilled in 869 BCE when all twelve tribes submitted to the reign of King David of the tribe of Judah. Abraham is the first person called a "Hebrew" in the Bible (Gen. 14:13). After 400 years in Egypt, the Hebrews were recognizable as a distinct people group (Exo 1:19).

Charles Krauthammer also has some good information on this subject:

"Israel" is the very embodiment of Jewish continuity: It is the only nation on earth that inhabits the same land, bears the same name, speaks the same language, and worships the same God that it did 3,000 years ago. You dig the soil and you find pottery from Davidic times, coins from Bar Kokhba, and 2,000-year-old scrolls written in a script remarkably like the one that today advertises ice cream at the corner candy store."

The people of Israel (also called the "Jewish People") trace their origin to Abraham, who established the belief that there is only one God, the creator of the universe. Abraham, his son (Isaac), and grandson Jacob (Israel) are referred to as the patriarchs of the Israelites. All three patriarchs lived in the land of Canaan, that later came to be known as the Land of Israel."

What is said above can be authenticated in scripture where Jacob (son of Isaac) blessed his twelve sons and spoke a blessing over them. When he came to Judah, he said:

⁹"You are a lion's cub, Judah;

you return from the prey, my son.

Like a lion he crouches and lies down,

like a lioness—who dares to rouse him?

¹⁰The scepter will not depart from Judah,

nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,

until he to whom it belong shall come

and the obedience of the nations shall be his" (Gen 49:9-10).

From this point on, Judah became the spokesman for his brothers. His tribe would become preeminent among the 12 and would be an ancestor of Jesus' genealogy (Mt 1:2, 17; LK, 3:23, 33).

The beginning of Israel

I had not studied the origin of the Israelites when I visited Israel (1996) with a tour group. Being there where the Bible was written and visiting the places where Jesus and the disciples walked whetted my appetite to learn more about Israel when I came home. I did not realize that God had named His chosen people "Israelites" as a nation before He led them to the promised land, Canaan, which became Israel!

I wondered where the name "Israel" came from. I've always had a keen interest in the origin of things and found my answers in Genesis. I encourage everyone to read the book of Genesis because it truly explains the beginning of everything. Without a clear understanding about the creation of the world you'll never understand the origin of what life is all about.

The little country of Israel, which is about the size of New Jersey, has been a subject of interest to many nations for centuries and its ownership has become very controversial. Why is the whole world watching it today and where does it fit into Bible prophecy? Why did it become a piece of land that would be fought for over and over? Does God have a plan for it in the future? When Jesus returns will He really set his feet on Mt. Olivet? There are many questions and theologians continue to debate Scripture on this subject but I'm not a theologian – this document is meant to only address my keen interest in the subject of God's promises to the Jews, and the question, "Why were they chosen to be the subject of the whole Bible"? God used them to bring us the Word of God – to bring the law of the land – laws with principles copied by other nations – the covenant that guided the Israelites – and the New Covenant which was instituted by Jesus, the "mystery of the Old Covenant" fulfilled through the New Covenant.

One thing that cannot be denied is the fact that Abraham is recognized as a historical, biblical figure embraced by the three major religions: Christians, Muslims and Jews. This is of a particular interest when visiting Israel because you are reminded of this just about everywhere you go. In some areas you pass the famous golden dome of the Arab mosque while approaching the famous Western Wall of the Jewish temple. When visiting the early Christian churches, all three cultures are present in the vicinity.

Genesis 15 explains how God appeared to Abraham making a covenant with him and his descendants to multiply and inherit the land of Israel. Abraham

believed the Lord. He asked the Lord how he would gain possession of the land and that's when God severed covenant with him. Blood was always shed. God also told him that his descendants would be strangers in a country not their own and would be enslaved for four hundred years and then come out. But Abraham would not – he would die and go to his fathers (v. 15). This is the first hint of life after death. God then said the fourth generation would go into the promised land (v. 16). We'll see how this came true when we talk about Moses.

Genesis 17 records God's continued relationship with Abraham and the covenant confirmed:

“When Abraham was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty, walk before me and be blameless. ²“Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.” ³ Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, ⁴“As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. ⁵No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. ⁷I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. ⁸The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.” ⁹ Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come” (Genesis 17:2-9).

When God spoke this it had been thirteen years since the birth of Ishmael.

Reading through these chapters I came to understand that the Lord made it clear that, if Abram was to receive God's promise and covenanted benefits, he must be God's faithful and obedient servant. His faith must be accompanied by the “obedience that comes from faith” (Ro 1:5).

Genesis 18 speaks of the three angels visiting Abraham and his excitement of their visitation and how he wanted to feed them – and when they told him about how Sarah would have a son in her old age:

¹⁷“Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, “Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?” ¹⁸And Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!”

¹⁹Then God said, “Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him **Isaac**. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after

him. ²⁰ And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. ²¹ But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year” (Genesis 17:17-21).

“And the LORD said unto **Abraham**, “Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.” Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, “Nay: but thou didst laugh.” (17) And the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?” (Gen. 18: 13-15, 17- 21, 26, 28-33).

I have a very doubting nature – maybe I was born that way or maybe I learned it while growing up. Like I said before - surely I’m a direct descendent of “doubting Thomas.” If I had been Sarah and was told I would have a baby at age 90 – I’m not sure I would have laughed. She thought she would never have a baby and that’s why she suggested Abraham sleep with her handmaiden, Hagar. Hagar bore a son and Ishmael was born and was thirteen years old when she heard she would have a son herself. I can’t imagine how Sarah felt when she realized God’s promise finally came true when she gave birth to Isaac! And here I go with my questions – when Sarah suggested her husband sleep with Hagar in order to have a child – did he wonder if that was the way God was going to make him a great nation? Reading Genesis 15 only says Abraham was told he would have a son from his own body – so how would he know for sure it would be through Sarah?

God is always faithful to His promises – **Isaac** was born and God’s covenant continued through him:

“³ Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. ⁴ I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, ⁵ because Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions” (Genesis 26:1-5).

Ishmael and Isaac were half brothers - they buried their father Abraham (Gen 25:9). Ishmael died at the age 130 and was gathered to his people. His descendants settled in the area from Havilah to Shur near the border of Egypt (Gen 25:18).

God continues with his promise to Abraham and his descendants making the same covenant promise - now to Jacob (son of Isaac) and we've come to the place in history where the word "Israel" comes into play:

"And God said unto **Jacob**, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother." (9) And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. (10) And God said unto him, "Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but **Israel** shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel". (11) And God said unto him, "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; (12) And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land" (Gen.35:1, 9-12).

Genesis 29 records Jacob's children – the famous twelve tribes that are mentioned in biblical history over and over including Revelation. The nation of Israel has been born with all descendants becoming Israelites.

One of Jacob's twelve sons was **Joseph** - I'm sure you remember the famous story of Jacob's favorite son, Joseph, and how he made a coat for him of many colors. His brothers were jealous of his relationship with God and their father so they sold him to the Ishmaelites who in turn sold him to Egypt as a slave. The Ishmaelites were Abraham's descendents through the son he had by Hagar. Joseph was sold to the Ishmaelites who were traveling from Gilead on their way to Egypt (Gen 37:28). Ishmael's people were hostile to all of his half brothers. I find it interesting that it was the Ishmaelites who bought and sold Joseph to Egypt. God prophesied Ishmael and his descendents would be like wild donkeys:

¹²He will be a wild donkey of a man;
his hand will be against everyone
and everyone's hand against him,
and he will live in hostility
toward all his brothers." (Gen16:12). Some believe they became the Arab nation.

The story of Joseph has been one of the highlights of Genesis – many sermons and a movie has come from this important event in biblical history. There are many lessons that can be learned from it.

You can't help but be in a spirit of wonderment how all this took place!!!
And thinking about how it came about when reading Exodus and about the

time Jacob's family of 70 journeyed to Egypt, at the request of Jacob's son, Joseph. Gen. 46:2-4 says,

“And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. (3) And he said, “I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.”

When I come to this place in God's chosen people's story I'm thinking about how Jacob had grieved over being told Joseph was dead. And to think about how Joseph was showing God's love to his brothers in spite of the way they had treated him – and sending for his father and family – can you imagine?!! God's relationship with them continued – thus the reason for giving Jacob the vision so he'd know he was to go to Egypt. Jacob's genealogy is repeated again naming the twelve sons (tribes) and their descendants – seventy in all made the journey to Egypt where Jacob would see his beloved son, Joseph, once again!!! (Gen 46). Jacob lived in Egypt seventeen years and gave instructions to Joseph about how to carry out his wishes about his burial Gen 47:28-30).

Before he died he passed on to Joseph the covenant God had made with him:

And Jacob said unto **Joseph**, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, (4) And said unto me, “Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession” (Gen. 48:3,4).

Joseph had been sold as a slave but due to his strong faith in God made the best of a bad situation and became a valuable person to the King and because God blessed everything he did, Egypt prospered. Joseph had a strong relationship with God – and practiced all the things he had learned from his father, Jacob, and grandfather, Abraham. This Israelite family of 70 had multiplied greatly and when the new king of Egypt did not know about Joseph and his life, he became worried of the sizable numbers of Israelites and was worried that they might join any enemy that might come against them so he made them slaves. The Israelites were holding to what they had been taught about the true God and lived within their culture. Exodus 1:16, 17 tells about how the new king ordered the two Hebrew midwives to kill boy babies at birth, but they feared God more than they feared

the king and wouldn't do it. Finally, he ordered every boy that is born thrown into the Nile. (verse 22).

And no doubt you are now thinking about the story of Moses – yes – this is where Moses came in and now plans are in order to deliver the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt!!!!

I wonder how many baby boys were drowned. Was this the first example of ethnic cleansing? God began His journey of leading the Israelites out of Egypt by listening to the cries of them over bondage:

“²³During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. ²⁴God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. ²⁵So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them” (Exo 2:23-25).

Well, you remember how Moses floated up the Nile in a basket and was found by Pharaoh's daughter. She found someone to nurse him among the Israelite women. Moses grew up in Pharaoh's household and one day as he was visiting the Israelite camp - he defended an Israelite who was being beaten by a harsh Egyptian, and actually killed the aggressor and buried him in the sand. It became known and he had to flee to Midian and lived there for a period of time. This is where he saw the burning bush:

“And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, “**Moses**, Moses.” And he said, Here am I. (5) And he said, “Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place where on thou standest is holy ground.” (6) Moreover he said, “I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. (7) And the LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; (8) And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large land, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. (9) And therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. (10) Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt” (11) And Moses said unto God, “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should

bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?:(12) And he said, “Certainly I will be with thee; that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain. (13) And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them? (14) And God said unto Moses, “I AM THAT I AM;” and he said, “thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hast sent me to you.” (15) And God said moreover unto Moses, “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, “The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations. (16) Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt: (17) And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey. (18) And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, and thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days’ journey unto the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God. (19) And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. (20) And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof; and after that he will let you go.(21) And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: (22) But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians” (Exodus 3: 4-22).

God told Moses in advance that His people would be released – did Moses trust God? Did he have faith that it would come to pass? Did he trust God when He said:

“Then the LORD said to Moses, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country.”

² God also said to Moses, “I am the LORD. ³ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself fully known to them. ⁴ I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they resided as foreigners. ⁵ Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are

enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant. ⁶“Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. ⁷I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. ⁸ And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD’ (Exodus 6:1-8).

I find it interesting that in the next few verses a family record of Moses and Aaron is recorded. Isn't it amazing how the genealogy is constantly repeated all the way to Mathew and Luke?!!!! Is that why our older generations always made sure their children knew family? You could always depend on written records in their Bibles.

Well, I'm sure you remember how Moses obeyed God and led the Israelites through the parting waters of the Red Sea. God's prophecy He made to Abraham about them being enslaved for 400 years and then being led out came true.

There were about 600,000 men (not counting women and children) when the Red Sea parted and they went through. After wandering in the wilderness for forty years and the Israelites finally reached the promised land, God said to Joshua:

“After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke **to Joshua** the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying: (2) “Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them – the children of Israel. (3) “Every place that the sole of your foot, will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. (4) “From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. (5) “No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. (6) “Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them” (Joshua 1:1-9)

God told **Caleb**, “But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it (Num 14:24).

Throughout history families have passed their beliefs, customs and genealogy from generation to generation. Most parents or grandparents

have told us about our heritage. When we read the Bible we can see where these ideas came from – GOD!!! When you read through the Bible, have you noticed how many times it repeats not only genealogy but stories? Notice how Joshua talks to the Israelites – his invasion into the promised land was around 1250 B.C.).

“Then **Joshua** gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and called for the elders of Israel, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God. (2) And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods. (3) ‘Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. (4) ‘To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. To Esau I gave the mountains of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. (5) ‘Also I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to what I did among them. Afterward I brought you out. (6) ‘Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and the Egyptians pursued your fathers and chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. (7) ‘So they cried out to the LORD; and He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, brought the sea upon them, and covered them. And your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. Then you dwelt in the wilderness a long time. (8) ‘And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, who dwelt on the other side of the Jordan, and they fought with you. But I gave them into your hand, that you might possess their land, and I destroyed them from before you. (9) ‘Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose to make war against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Boer to curse you. (10) ‘But I would not listen to Balaam; therefore he continued to bless you. So I delivered you out of his hand. (11) ‘Then you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. And the men of Jericho fought against you – also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But I delivered them into your hand. (12) ‘I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, also the two kings of the Amorites, but not with your sword or with your bow. (13) ‘I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plan”” Joshua 24:1-13).

When Joshua was in advanced age he gave instructions to the leaders and renewed the covenant (Joshua 23 & 24). When he died, the Israelites asked God:

“Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, ‘Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them’?

The answer is found in scripture:

“After Joshua died, **Judah** led the Israelites, “After the death of Joshua, the Israelites asked the LORD, “Who of us is to go up first to fight against the Canaanites?”

²The LORD answered, “Judah shall go up; I have given the land into their hands.”

³The men of Judah then said to the Simeonites their fellow Israelites, “Come up with us into the territory allotted to us, to fight against the Canaanites. We in turn will go with you into yours.” So the Simeonites went with them” (Judges 1:1,2).

As the fierce battles continued with the Israelites taking the promised land the time came for Samuel to anoint Saul to save them from the Philistines. God said Saul would reign over the people:

¹⁵Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed this to Samuel:

¹⁶“About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him ruler over my people Israel; he will deliver them from the hand of the Philistines. I have looked on my people, for their cry has reached me.” ¹⁷When Samuel caught sight of Saul, the LORD said to him, “This is the man I spoke to you about; he will govern my people” (1 Samuel 9:15-17).

The Lord is faithful to His people but if they choose not to follow Him, He calls another to carry out His will. He rejected Saul and sent Samuel to anoint David.

¹⁰“Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.” ¹¹So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?”

“There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.”

Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”

¹²So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.

Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one” (1 Samuel 16:10-12).

God chose **David** to rule over Israel and promised to establish the throne of his kingdom forever:

“But it happened that night that the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, (5) “Go and tell My servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Would you build a house for Me to dwell in? (6) “For I have not dwelt in a house since the time that I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt, even to this day, but have moved about in a tent and in a tabernacle.” (7) “Wherever I have moved about with all the children of Israel, have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, ‘Why have you not built Me a

house of cedar?” (8) “Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: “I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel. (9) “And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a great name, like the name of the great men who are on the earth. (10) “Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously, (11) “since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house. (12) “When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. (13) “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (14) “I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. (15) “But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. (16) And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.” (17) According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David” (II Sam 7:4-17).

Speaking of David – we can never say enough about him – he was the apple of God’s eye. He taught us so much about praise – like this one (and notice God’s promise continues through him):

- ¹Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name;
make known among the nations what he has done.
- ²Sing to him, sing praise to him;
tell of all his wonderful acts.
- ³Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.
- ⁴Look to the LORD and his strength;
seek his face always.
- ⁵Remember the wonders he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,
- ⁶you his servants, the descendants of Abraham,
his chosen ones, the children of Jacob.
- ⁷He is the LORD our God;
his judgments are in all the earth.
- ⁸He remembers his covenant forever,
the promise he made, for a thousand generations,
- ⁹the covenant he made with Abraham,

the oath he swore to Isaac.

¹⁰He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree,

to Israel as an everlasting covenant:

¹¹“To you I will give the land of Canaan

as the portion you will inherit” (Psalm 105:1-11).

God always chose a leader to carry on with His plan – David said to his son, **Solomon:**

“When the time drew near for David to die, he gave a charge to Solomon his son.

²“I am about to go the way of all the earth,” he said. “So be strong, act like a man, ³and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in obedience to him, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and regulations, as written in the Law of Moses. Do this so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go ⁴and that the LORD may keep his promise to me: ‘If your descendants watch how they live, and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel’ (1 Kings 2:1-4).

“Then David rested with his fathers and was buried in the City of David. He had reigned forty years over Israel – seven years in Hebron and thirty three in Jerusalem. So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David, and his rule was firmly established” (1 Kings 2:10-12).

I have to keep reminding myself that this study is all about our heritage – and I can get caught up in the stories as I go along. When I read about the building of Solomon’s temple (950 B.C) I think about the splendor of all of it. But I need to get back to the study!!!!

Can you imagine this - the Lord wanting a house to dwell in – He moved about with the children of Israel with a desire to dwell in a place of worship! We need to always be mindful of this fact – that God wants to fellowship with us – this is how we have a relationship with Him – we need to talk to Him often – and listen! “Be still and know that I am God” (Ps 46:10).

When I first read about God’s desire to dwell in a place of worship it made me realize He did create us for relationship. And now – He lives in the hearts of all believers and we are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

“**19** Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;” (1 Cor 16:19-20).

Do you think we have any idea of this importance – any idea of the power we have living within – if we could only crucify the flesh 24/7!!!! Listen to how God expresses Himself wanting a building to dwell in:

“But it happened that night that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, (4) “Go and tell My servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD: “You shall not build Me a house to dwell in. (5) “For I have not dwelt in a house since the time that I brought up Israel, even to this day, but have gone from tent to tent, and from one tabernacle to another. (6) “Wherever I have moved about with all Israel, have I ever spoken a word to any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people, saying, ‘Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?’” (7) “Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts; “I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel. (8) “And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a name like the name of the great men who are on the earth. (9) “Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously, (10) “since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel. Also I will subdue all your enemies. Furthermore I tell you that the LORD will build you a house. (11) “And it shall be, when your days are fulfilled, when you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up your seed after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. (12) “He shall build Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. (13) I will be his Father, and he shall be My son; and I will not take My mercy away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. (14) “And I will establish him in My house and in My kingdom forever; and his throne shall be established forever”” I Chron. 17:3-14).

“And David said to Solomon: “My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build a house to the name of the LORD my God; (8) “but the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘You have shed much blood and have made great wars; you shall not build a house for My name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in My sight. (9) ‘Behold, a son shall be born to you, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies all around. His name shall be Solomon, for I will give peace and quietness to Israel in his days. (10) ‘He shall build a house for My name, and he shall be My son, and I will be his Father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever” (I Chron. 22:7-10).

“Then the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: “I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. (13) “When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, (14) “if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (15) “Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place. (16) “For now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and

My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. (17) “As for you, if you walk before Me as your father David walked, and do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgments, “then I will establish the throne of your kingdom, as I covenanted with David your father, saying, ‘You shall not fail to have a man as ruler in Israel.’ (19) “But if you turn away and forsake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods, and worship them, (20) “then I will uproot them from My land which I have given them; and this house which I have sanctified for My name I will cast out of My sight, and will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples” (2 Chron. 7:12-22).

“And behold, I propose to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spoke to my father David, saying, “Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he shall build the house for My name” (1 Kings 5:5).

“In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the LORD” (1 Kings 6:1).

God gave specific instructions how to build the temple – it is so well described that it makes me want to walk through it.

“The word of the LORD came to Solomon: ¹²“As for this temple you are building, if you follow my decrees, observe my laws and keep all my commands and obey them, I will fulfill through you the promise I gave to David your father” (1 Kings 6:11-12).

What was the promise? God repeated the covenant He made with Abraham and descendants many times,

“I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. ⁸The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God” (Genesis 17:7-8).

I took note of the word “*everlasting*” – Canaan became Israel and God promised it to the Jews forever!!! God loved this earthly family and continued to bless them when they were faithful – He listened to them and never broke a promise. He said He would bless those who bless Israel and curse those who didn’t:

³I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3).

He continued relationships with Abraham's descendants. God tells Solomon IF he did all He asked, He would establish the throne *over Israel forever!* But if he (Solomon and his sons) failed and did not follow God any longer and not keep the commandments and statutes and serve other gods and worship them – He (God) would cut off Israel from the land which He gave them and the house He gave and cast them out of sight and they would be a proverb among all people:

²“That the LORD appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon.

³And the LORD said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there forever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.

⁴And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments:

⁵Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel.

⁶But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them:

⁷Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people:

⁸And at this house, which is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and to this house?

⁹And they shall answer, Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the LORD brought upon them all this evil” (1 Kings 9:2-9 (KJV).

God said He will not forsake the whole kingdom because David kept His commandments and statutes. He will give it to the 10 tribes and 1 tribe to David's son (Solomon) so David would always have a lamp before Him in Jerusalem – the city He chose to put His name there.

“However I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, because I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of My servant David, whom I chose because he kept My commandments and My statutes. (35) ‘But I will take the kingdom out of his son’s hand and give it to you – ten tribes. (36) ‘And to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may always have a lamp before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Myself, to put My name there. (37) ‘So I will take you, and you shall reign over all your heart desires, and you shall be king over Israel. (38) ‘Then it shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you. (39) ‘And I will afflict the descendants of David because of this, but not forever’” (I KINGS 11: 34-39).

I encourage you to stop here and read Solomon’s prayer (1 Kings 8:22-53). I love to read prayers that were said in the Bible – just think – someday we’ll meet all these saints!!! Can we pray mighty prayers like they did? Don’t you just love reading Psalms and see how they prayed?

But when you read the rest of the story you see how Solomon, in spite of all God’s blessings, allowed greed to enter and turned to other gods, making God angry because his heart had turned away from Him (I Kings 11:9).

God does not tolerate foolishness:

¹¹ So the LORD said to Solomon, “Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates. ¹² Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. ¹³ Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen” 1 Kings 11:11-13).

This reminds me of how many times God has blessed His chosen people and for long periods of time they did well – then would turn to the wrong things. In our fallen nature we are prone to do the same thing – just look at our world today in spite of the fact that God sent His only Son to die for our sins – we continue to sin – but – we know what’s at the end of the book and we win in the end!!!! Back to Solomon....

It was during Solomon’s life time that Israel became divided and the LORD gave instruction to **Jeroboam**:

³¹ Then he said to Jeroboam, “Take ten pieces for yourself, for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘See, I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon’s hand and give you ten

tribes. ³²But for the sake of my servant David and the city of Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, he will have one tribe. ³³I will do this because they have^[a] forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Molek the god of the Ammonites, and have not walked in obedience to me, nor done what is right in my eyes, nor kept my decrees and laws as David, Solomon's father, did ³⁴“But I will not take the whole kingdom out of Solomon's hand; I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of David my servant, whom I chose and who obeyed my commands and decrees. ³⁵I will take the kingdom from his son's hands and give you ten tribes. ³⁶I will give one tribe to his son so that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I chose to put my Name.³⁷However, as for you, I will take you, and you will rule over all that your heart desires; you will be king over Israel. ³⁸If you do whatever I command you and walk in obedience to me and do what is right in my eyes by obeying my decrees and commands, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you. ³⁹I will humble David's descendants because of this, but not forever.” (1 Kings 11:31-39).

Technically, Jews are Israelite Hebrews from the region of Judea, descendants of Abraham (a Hebrew) and Jacob (an Israelite), through Judah (a Jew). Jacob's fourth son was named "Judah," and his descendants were called "Judahites" or "Judeans." After Solomon's death, the nation of Israel split into two kingdoms: in the Northern Kingdom were the "non-Jewish" Hebrew Israelites (descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through ten of his sons); and the Southern Kingdom were the "Jewish" Hebrews Israelites (descendants of Jacob's other two sons who lived in Judea). Later, the name "Judean" was shortened to "Jew."

This represents a very narrow definition of terms, however. In common usage, Jews, Israelites and Hebrews are all words referring to God's chosen people, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Solomon dies – and who will succeed him?

⁴¹ As for the other events of Solomon's reign—all he did and the wisdom he displayed—are they not written in the book of the annals of Solomon?⁴² Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. ⁴³ Then he rested with his ancestors and was buried in the city of David his father. And **Rehoboam** his son succeeded him as king (1 Kings 11:41-43).

By the way the Lord did *not* say He would blot out the name of Israel...but *saved* them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash:

“And the LORD did not say that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven; but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of **Joash**” (2 Kings 14:27).

Have you noticed as you read through the Bible, over and over it mentions how much has been written about all these subjects? 2 Chron 12:15-16 has this to say about Rehoboam’s death:

¹⁵ As for the events of Rehoboam’s reign, from beginning to end, are they not written in the records of Shemaiah the prophet and of Iddo the seer that deal with genealogies? There was continual warfare between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. ¹⁶ Rehoboam rested with his ancestors and was buried in the City of David. And **Abijah** his son succeeded him as king.

When I look at the events of each successor of Israel I’m tempted to record each one and their deaths and name the successor – but that is not my purpose of this study. As I read through the Bible I’m reminded constantly the importance of the Jewish people and Israel. We have the repeated covenants, the promises God made over and over to remind us of His plan and, speaking of Jerusalem, He said He would preserve it (Isaiah 31:4,5). He will defend it – save it for His OWN sake and His servant David’s sake:

“For thus the LORD has spoken to me: “As a lion roars, and a young lion over his prey (when a multitude of shepherds is summoned against him, he will not be afraid of their voice nor be disturbed by their noise), so the LORD of hosts will come down to fight for Mount Zion and for its hill. (5) Like birds flying about, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem. Defending, He will also deliver it; passing over, He will preserve it” (ISA. 31:4, 5).

God continually appointed a leader to take the place of the former one. How do you suppose He knew who to choose? No doubt He knew their heart - He can read hearts – something no one else can do. When He looks at your heart – will He find a searching heart? Do you search for Him? Are you interested in searching for answers to questions you have? Here’s something God said in 2 Chronicles 15:2 about seeking Him:

“.....The LORD is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.”

I truly believe if we search for Him and His wisdom like silver and gold we will find Him! And we should praise Him just like the Israelites did: “....for seven days with great rejoicing, while the Levites and priests sang to the LORD every day, accompanied by the LORD’S instruments of praise.”

Well, I got side tracked again but I just had to put in those thoughts – they’re good ones – right?

Back to our subject – our heritage – genealogies – and God’s promises. We’ve been discussing how God has continued His covenant promises through the generations and as I’m walking you through those promises from book to book in the Bible – I like taking time to note relationships with God because that’s our life – that is what it’s all about – right? And I’m suggesting you look at certain passages along the way that I think are significant like the one in Nehemiah where the Israelites confess their sins. If you want to stop here and read a wonderful long prayer read Nehemiah 9:9-37.

Do you realize there’s no injustice with God?

”Now let the fear of the LORD be on you. Judge carefully, for with the LORD our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery” (2 Chron 19:7). And God’s name will remain in Jerusalem forever: “He built altars in the temple of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, “My Name will remain in Jerusalem forever” (2 Chron 33:4).

Can anyone or anything be compared to God? “To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?” says the Holy One (ISA. 40:1-5,25).

Don’t you just love the way God reasons with us – perhaps this is where we learned how to reason – in the verse above notice how He asks, “To whom then will you liken me...?” In other words – if we don’t believe in God – who do we put our trust in?

Now that we’ve come to Isaiah you’ll see a lot of Scripture because he was one of the outstanding prophets of the Lord. I’ve printed most of the verses that are considered for this study for you because if you’re like me, you won’t take the time to look them up. The more of God’s word you get in you – the better, so please don’t skip them.

Isaiah prophesied in Judah from 760 to 713 B.C. It was during his ministry that the northern kingdom of Israel was taken captive. He was born in Jerusalem, Israel, and was said to have found his calling as a prophet when he saw a vision in the year of King Uzziah's death:

“The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah (Isa 1:10).

In the first chapter he speaks about Israel being a rebellious nation. He speaks judgment on Jerusalem and Judah and he prophesies about the future – the virgin birth of Jesus:

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel” (Isa 7:14). This was fulfilled in Matthew 1:23: “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel – which means, ‘God with us.’

I wonder how much Isaiah understood about the coming Savior. Part of the passage of Scripture below has been put to music and is one of my favorite songs – if you memorize scripture – this is a good one. Did you know that memorizing is one of the best exercises for your memory? Old timers use to always encourage their children to memorize verses in the Bible and would often quote them at the dinner table. If you do it when you’re young you’ll not likely forget them. This might sound foreign to you but when I was in high school and we met for assembly we were always led to recite Psalm 23. Also when I was in the first grade every student was expected to recite the Lord’s Prayer. It’s too bad this is no longer practiced in the public schools.

Here’s Isaiah’s prophecy about the birth of Christ:

“For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.

He will reign on David’s throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this” (Isa 9:6-7).

Many of Isaiah’s prophecies have already been fulfilled but there are many yet to come. This is something good to remember when we watch the news and get discouraged about how we see our country and world declining.

Never in my wildest dreams would I have ever believed the day would come when abortion and gay marriage would be made legal. And so much immorality, greed, selfishness and poor work ethics – suicide – homelessness – and on and on I could go. Are we truly living in the last days? Only God knows the answer to that question but when we see all these things happening we can be encouraged by understanding that Bible prophecy will be fulfilled – that’s for sure! If you’re interested in reading about the sign of the times you can read Matthew 24, Luke 21 and Revelation. God’s word tells us His purpose will happen:

“This is the purpose that is purposed against the whole earth, and this is the land that is stretched out over all the nations. (27) For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?” (ISA. 14:26, 27).

Prophecy teachers speak about countries in the Middle East marching against Jerusalem during the end and God defending it:

“For thus the LORD has spoken to me: “As a lion roars, and a young lion over his prey when a multitude of shepherds is summoned against him, he will not be afraid of their voice nor be disturbed by their noise, so the LORD of hosts will come down to fight for Mount Zion and for its hill. (5) Like birds flying about, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem. Defending, He will also deliver it; passing over, He will preserve it” (ISA. 31:4, 5).

The Lord continually reminds Israel that they (descendants of Abraham) have been chosen and He will give them the strength to carry out His will. God promises He will hold her hand:

“But you, Israel, my servant,
Jacob, whom I have chosen,
you descendants of Abraham my friend,
9 I took you from the ends of the earth,
from its farthest corners I called you.
I said, ‘You are my servant’;
I have chosen you and have not rejected you.
10 So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isa 41:8-10).

In turn they expressed their appreciation:

“LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way” (I kings 8:23).

The following verses in Isaiah have to do with the coming of Jesus – they deal with the law of God, doctrine of the gospel – the covenant that leads to Jesus being the mediator that will include Gentiles.

“Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. (2) He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. (3) A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth. (4) He will not fail nor be discouraged, till He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands shall wait for His law.” (5) Thus says God the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out. Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it: (6) “I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, (7) To open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house. (8) I am the LORD, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images. (9) Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them” (ISA. 42:1-9).

Isaiah, a servant of God, speaks of chosen Israel, and God pouring out His Spirit on them, and prophesies the Redeemer – the “first and the last.” The footnote says, “Since the Lord was present with the first of the generations and will still be there with the last of them, he is the eternal Lord of history and nations.” Please take time to focus on this because it will help you understand the concept of the Trinity.

The first and last is mentioned several times in Scripture and let’s look at how it applies to both God the Father and His Son in these instances:

“Look, he is coming with the clouds,”

and “every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him”;

and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.”

So shall it be! Amen.⁸ “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty” (Rev 1:7, 8).

¹⁷When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. (Rev 1:17, 18).

It’s obvious the above verses are speaking about Jesus. Now look at this verse referring to God.

⁶He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children” (Rev 21:6, 7).

God is making provision for future Israel and will include the Gentile believers and at the same time reminds us of Who He is – The LORD Almighty – the first and the last (note verse 6):

“But now listen, Jacob, my servant,
Israel, whom I have chosen.
²This is what the LORD says—
he who made you, who formed you in the womb,
and who will help you:
Do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant,
Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.
³For I will pour water on the thirsty land,
and streams on the dry ground;
I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring,
and my blessing on your descendants.
⁴They will spring up like grass in a meadow,
like poplar trees by flowing streams.
⁵Some will say, ‘I belong to the LORD’;
others will call themselves by the name of Jacob;
still others will write on their hand, ‘The LORD’s,’
and will take the name Israel.
⁶“This is what the LORD says—
Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty:
I am the first and I am the last;
apart from me there is no God.
⁷Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it.
Let him declare and lay out before me
what has happened since I established my ancient people,
and what is yet to come—
yes, let them foretell what will come.
⁸Do not tremble, do not be afraid.
Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago?

You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me?

No, there is no other Rock; I know not one” (Isa 44:1-8).

Did you notice God saying, “This is what the LORD says?” In other words – “LISTEN – what I’m saying is important!!!” This is used often in Scripture.

God is and always has been very vocal when speaking to His people – He counsels them when they’re stubborn and disobedient – and blesses them when doing right, always reminding them Who He is:

¹²“Listen to me, Jacob,

Israel, whom I have called:

I am he; I am the first and I am the last.

¹³My own hand laid the foundations of the earth,

and my right hand spread out the heavens;

when I summon them,

they all stand up together” (Isa 48:12-13).

“ I make known the end from the beginning,

from ancient times, what is still to come.

I say, ‘My purpose will stand,

and I will do all that I please

From the east I summon a bird of prey;

from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose.

What I have said, that I will bring about;

what I have planned, that I will do” (Isa 46:10,11).

God comforts Israel and reminds them of the everlasting covenant:

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. (2) Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. (3) Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you – the sure mercies of David. (4) Indeed I have given him as a witness to the people, a leader and commander for the people. (5) Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, and nations who do not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, and the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you.” (8) “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. (9) “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. (10) “For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it

may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, (11) So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isa 55:1-5, 8-13).

Isa. 54 speaks of a perpetual covenant of peace and Isa. 55:3 says,

“I will make an everlasting covenant with you.”

In the following verses the Lord reminds them of His covenant with honor for those holding to it and will gather others:

“ Thus says the LORD: “Keep justice, and do righteousness, for My salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed. (2) Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.” (4) For thus says the LORD: “To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant, (5) Even to them I will give in My house and within My walls a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that I shall not be cut off. (6) “Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants – everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant – (7) Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” (8) The Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, “Yet I will gather to him others besides those who are gathered to him” (Isa 56:1,2,4-8).

Isaiah 59:20, 21 speaks of the Redeemer:

“The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,” declares the LORD.

²¹“As for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the LORD. “My Spirit, who is on you, will not depart from you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will always be on your lips, on the lips of your children and on the lips of their descendants—from this time on and forever,” says the LORD.

Again, the covenant says, “*forever!*”

When I’m researching I read the whole chapters of each verse and wish I could include Isaiah 60 (the Gentiles bless Zion), 61 (the good news of salvation) and 62 (the assurance of Zion’s salvation). Maybe you’ll take time to read them – they are *really* good! Isaiah prophecies how the Gentiles will be included in the new covenant! You’ll see the fulfillment when we get to the N.T.

Now we’ve come to **Jeremiah** and he speaks a lot about Israel being restored in chapters 14-21.

God never wanted Israel wiped out (even though He scattered them due to disobedience (Jer. 18:1-17) and when they were taken into captivity to Babylon he gave them instructions on how to live out their lives and increase in numbers while there:

“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: (5) Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. (6) Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters – that you may be increased there, and not diminished. (7) And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace. (8) For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed. (9) For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them, says the LORD. (10) For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. (11) For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil to give you a future and a hope. (12) Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. (13) And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. (14) I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive (Jer 29:4-14).

Jeremiah 31:31-40 states the famous New Covenant that is repeated in the New Testament and alluded to many times:

The New Covenant

Jer 31:31 "Look, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I'll make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

32 It won't be like the covenant I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. They broke my covenant, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.

33 Rather, this is the covenant that I'll make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD. "I'll put my Law within them and will write it on their hearts. I'll be their God and they will be my people.

34 No longer will a person teach his neighbor or his relative: 'Know the LORD.' Instead, they'll all know me, from the least to the greatest of them," declares the LORD. "Indeed, I'll forgive their iniquity, and I'll remember their sin no more."

35 This is what the LORD says, who gives the sun for light by day, the laws that govern the moon and stars for light by night, and who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar. The LORD of the Heavenly Armies is his name:

36 "If these laws cease to function in my presence," declares the LORD, "then the descendants of Israel will cease to be a nation in my presence for all time!"

37 This is what the LORD says: "If the heavens could be measured above, or the foundations of the earth be searched out below, then I also would reject all the descendants of Israel because of everything they have done," declares the LORD.

38 "Look, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the city of the LORD will be rebuilt from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate.

39A measuring line will go straight out from there to the hill of Gareb, and then it will turn to Goah.

40 The whole valley of dead bodies and ashes and all the fields as far as the Brook Kidron to the corner of the Horse Gate toward the east will be holy to the LORD. It won't be uprooted or overthrown again, forever."

There is a controversy about end time views and I won't go into that but considering the subject I'm writing about – some believe the Church replaced Israel and the Old Testament was fulfilled through Jesus; therefore, they believe God has no plans for the land of Israel and do not believe the Jews returning to Israel and it becoming a state in 1948 has anything to do with Bible prophecy. This is the Amillennial view.

Those who adhere to the Premillennial view believe the above verses in Jeremiah (the new covenant) were constituted by Jesus and will be ultimately fulfilled when Jesus returns and sets up His kingdom.

Personally, I'm still working on what I understand about prophecies being already fulfilled or in the future but in this study I'm focusing on the everlasting covenant and promises God made to Israel. And it seems obvious to me that "forever" said over and over means what it says!

"Now therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city of which you say, 'It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence': (37) 'Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath; I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. (38) 'They shall be My people, and I will be their God; (39) 'then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. (40) 'And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me. (41) 'Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with all My heart and with all My soul.' (42) "For thus says the LORD: 'Just as I have brought all this great calamity on this people, so I will bring on them all the good that I have promised them. (43) 'And fields will be bought in this land which you say, "It is desolate,

without man or beast; it has been given into the hand of the Chaldeans.” (44) ‘Men will buy fields for money, sign deeds and seal them, and take witnesses, in the land of Benjamin, in the places around Jerusalem, in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the lowland, and in the cities of the South; for I will cause their captives to return,’ says the LORD” (Jer 32:36-44).

Read Jeremiah 33:19-26 and notice the permanence of God’s promise to the Israelite descendants:

¹⁹ The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: ²⁰ “This is what the LORD says: ‘If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night no longer come at their appointed time,²¹ then my covenant with David my servant—and my covenant with the Levites who are priests ministering before me—can be broken and David will no longer have a descendant to reign on his throne. ²² I will make the descendants of David my servant and the Levites who minister before me as countless as the stars in the sky and as measureless as the sand on the seashore.’” ²³ The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: ²⁴ “Have you not noticed that these people are saying, ‘The LORD has rejected the two kingdoms he chose’? So they despise my people and no longer regard them as a nation. ²⁵ This is what the LORD says: ‘If I have not made my covenant with day and night and established the laws of heaven and earth, ²⁶ then I will reject the descendants of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his sons to rule over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes and have compassion on them.’”

The following shows God promises Jonadab the son of Rechab would not lack a man to stand before Him forever:

“And Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts and done according to all that he commanded you, (19) ‘therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me forever” (Jer 35:18).

As I read through the Old Testament, I feel such joy when God’s people are being faithful and so sad when they turn away from Him. I feel the same way today especially when I listen to the news. Just in my lifetime I’ve seen the huge decline of Christianity, especially in the last 30 years!!!

God has faithfully encouraged His people as in Lamentations 3:31:

“For men are not cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men.”

In Ezek 2:1-10 – God sends **Ezekiel** to rebellious Israel – a scroll was given with lamentations, mourning and woe.

God’s everlasting covenant is mentioned in Ezek 16:59-60:

“This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will deal with you as you deserve, because you have despised my oath by breaking the covenant. Yet I will remember the covenant I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you.”

There’s that word “everlasting” again! Now we’ve come to Ezekiel and the whole chapter discusses a lot about Israel and end times so I will only give the headings and maybe you’ll read all of them someday! Ezekiel has a lot of prophecy about Israel:

EZEK. 11:14-25 GOD WILL RESTORE ISRAEL

EZEK. 16:1-14 GOD’S LOVE FOR JERUSALEM;

EZEK. 16:60-63 AN EVERLASTING COVENANT

EZEK. 17:1-21 THE EAGLES AND THE VINE; (22-24) ISRAEL EXALTED AT LAST

EZEK. 18:1-18 A FALSE PROVERB REFUTED; (19-32) TURN AND LIVE;

EZEK. 20:33-44 GOD WILL RESTORE ISRAEL;

EZEK. 36:1-15 BLESSING ON ISRAEL; (16-38) THE RENEWAL OF ISRAEL

EZEK. 37:1-14 THE DRY BONES LIVE; (15-28) ONE KINGDOM, ONE KING (Prophecy teachers believe this is speaking of the Jews regathered in Jerusalem, 1948)

EZEK. 38:1-17) GOG AND ALLIES ATTACK ISRAEL; (18-23) JUDGMENT ON GOG (Most prophecy scholars believe this chapter speaks of war against the Jewish people in end times led by Russia)

EZEK. 39:1-10 GOG’S ARMIES DESTROYED; (11-16) THE BURIAL OF GOG;

EZEK. 39:17-20 A TRIUMPHANT FESTIVAL; (21-29) ISRAEL RESTORED TO THE LAND

Another prophecy about Israel and “forever:”

“The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple. (6) Then I heard Him speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me. (7) And He said to me, “Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of

the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. No more shall the house of Israel defile My holy name, they nor their kings, by their harlotry or with the carcasses of their kings on their high places. (8) “When they set their threshold by My threshold, and their doorpost by My doorpost, with a wall between them and Me, they defiled My holy name by the abominations which they committed; therefore I have consumed them in My anger. (9) “Now let them put their harlotry and the carcasses of their kings far away from Me, and I will dwell in their midst forever” (Ezek 43:5-9).

EZEK. 44:1-3 –DIRECTIONS CONSECRATING THE ALTER OF THE TEMPLE – LAWS GOVERNING PRIESTS – WORSHIP OFFERINGS – BORDERS OF LAND, ETC

EZEK. 48:1-29 – DIVISION OF THE LAND

Have you ever studied Daniel? There is so much information about end times in it.

Something that I’ve taken note of about people is the fact that they have not changed much during these six thousand years of recorded history. They seem to have the same emotions we have today God continually disciplines them when they turn from Him and blesses them when they repent. These chapters demonstrate this over and over:

HOSEA (1-9) THE FAMILY OF HOSEA; (10-11) THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

HOSEA 14:1-9 ISRAEL RESTORED AT LAST

HOSEA 4:1-10 –GOD’S CHARGE AGAINST ISRAEL

HOSEA 5:1-15 – JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL AND JUDAH

HOSEA 14:1-9 – ISRAEL RESTORED AT LAST

JOEL 2:18-27 THE LAND REFRESHED; 28-32 GOD’S SPIRIT POURED OUT

MICAH 2:12-13 – ISRAEL RESTORED – THE LORD WILL REIGN OVER THEM IN MOUNT ZION FOREVER

Micah 4:1 starts with "*In the last days*" and prophecies about the future when many nations will go to the mountain of the LORD.....and hear the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. Verses 3 & 4 talk about them:

“beating their swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation nor will they train for war any more. Every man will sit under his own vine

and under his own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the LORD Almighty has spoken.”

Then it speaks about His promise:

““In that day,” declares the LORD,

“I will gather the lame;

I will assemble the exiles

and those I have brought to grief.

⁷I will make the lame my remnant,

those driven away a strong nation.

The LORD will rule over them in Mount Zion

from that day and forever (Micah 4:6-7).

No doubt this is speaking of the Messianic kingdom! A remnant of the Jews is promised the coming of Jesus:

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,

though you are small among the clans^[a] of Judah,

out of you will come for me

one who will be ruler over Israel,

whose origins are from of old,

from ancient times.”

³Therefore Israel will be abandoned

until the time when she who is in labor bears a son,

and the rest of his brothers return

to join the Israelites.

⁴He will stand and shepherd his flock

in the strength of the LORD,

in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.

And they will live securely, for then his greatness

will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will

Be their peace” (Micah 5:2-5).

I love the counsel the Lord gave them, “To act justly and to love mercy and walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:2). Isn’t this the same counsel we’re given in the N.T.? Notice the prophecy about the faithful remnant:

“Therefore wait for Me,” says the LORD, “until the day I rise up for plunder, My determination is to gather the nations to My assembly of kingdoms, to Pour on them My indignation, all My fierce anger; all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy. (9) “For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord. (10) From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, the daughter of My dispersed ones, shall bring My offering. (11) In that day you shall not be shamed for any of your deeds in which you transgress against Me; for then I will take away from your midst those who rejoice in your pride, and you shall no longer be haughty in My holy mountain. (12) I will leave in your midst a meek and humble people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD. (13) The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness and speak no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed their flocks and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid” (Zeph 3:8-13).

Haggai 2:1-9 –COMING GLORY OF GOD’S HOUSE

Zach. 2:1-5 – FUTURE JOY OF ZION AND MANY NATIONS

ZACH. 8:1-23 JERUSALEM, HOLY CITY OF THE

ZACH. 9:9-13: “A mixed race shall settle in Ashod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. (7) I will take away the blood from his mouth, and the abominations from between his teeth. But he who remains, even he shall be for our God, and shall be like a leader in Judah, and Ekron like a Jebusite. (8) I will camp around My house because of the army, because of him who passes by and him who returns. No more shall an oppressor pass through them, for now I have seen with My eyes. THE COMING KING (9) “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey. (10) I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; the battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; his dominion shall be ‘from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.’ GOD WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE (11) “As for you also, because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. (12) Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope. Even today I declare that I will restore double to you. (13) For I have bent Judah, My bow, fitted the bow with Ephraim, and raised up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and make you like the sword of a mighty man.”

Zach. 10:3-12 RESTORTATION OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL

MALACHI 1:1-5 ISRAEL BELOVED OF GOD

MALACHI 3:1-7 THE COMING MESSENGER; 8-12 DO NOT ROB GOD; 13-15 THE PEOPLE COMPLAIN HARSHLY; 16-18 A BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE

MALACHI 4:1-6 THE GREAT DAY OF GOD

Note: The Assyrian empire led Israel into captivity in 722 BC. The Babylonian Empire (600 BC) – exiles from Judah into Babylonian captivity 605, 597, 586 (see map 8, NIV) Jerusalem in Jesus' time.

Now, I've come to the end of the O.T. I hope you've notice how many times the Lord has repeated His promises and covenant to Israel – how He's blessed them when they were obedient and punished them when disobedient. It seems to me that we can learn so much from reading the O.T. about God's love, relationship, praise, prayer, justice, laws, judgment, punishment, mercy, our origin, our purpose in life and life after death. The ancient history of our world is all there. In fact, the Bible mentions that so many books could be written about events in biblical times that the world could not contain them. The N.T. quotes verses from the O.T. many, many times – it's God's history – it's a part of our Jewish/Christian heritage – please don't neglect to read it.

As I begin the N.T. I'm amazed at how God's plan fits together and prophecy being fulfilled like this one:

²⁰ “And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.

²¹ As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and forever” (Isaiah 59:20-21). We've already read these verses but now we're looking at them in light of the N.T.

Sometimes when reading verses like the above I stop and meditate on what is actually being said and this one is very powerful because God is speaking to *Israel* and foretelling that His Spirit is with *them* and He's placed His words within *them* which will *never* depart and not only *them* at that time but with the descendant's descendants *forever!!!!* And we'll find out in the N.T. that we (you and me – and all believers) are grafted in – we will always have His Spirit and Words and be in His covenant *forever!!!!* I find this SO comforting!!!!

We know the “coming Redeemer” mentioned in Isaiah above is a prophecy of Jesus coming to Zion! He is the One who will institute the new covenant. The N.T. begins with the lineage of the promised King of the Jews – the lion

of Judah (the phrase Jacob used when he blessed his son, Judah). As I've already mentioned, the word "Jew" derived from the name Judah, who was one of the twelve sons of Jacob. Before Jacob's death he gave a blessing over each of his twelve sons – this was spoken to his forth son, Judah:

You are a lion's cub, Judah;

you return from the prey, my son.

Like a lion he crouches and lies down,

like a lioness—who dares to rouse him?

¹⁰ The scepter will not depart from Judah,

nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,

until he to whom it belongs shall come

and the obedience of the nations shall be his (Gen 49:9,10).

The "Lion of Judah" starts in Genesis and ends in Revelation 1:5:

"Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

The last prophet in the O.T. was Malachi and he prophesied John the Baptist coming to prepare the way for the Redeemer, the King of the Jews:

"I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come, says the LORD Almighty" (Mal. 3:1).

And again by the prophet, Isaiah:

"Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" says your God. (2) "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. (3) A voice of one calling: "in the desert prepare the way for the LORD make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. (4) Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. (5) and the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken" (Isa 40:1-5).

This was fulfilled in Matthew 3:3:

"This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

After John was born, Zachariah (father of John) prophesied the forerunner of Jesus:

⁶⁷“His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

⁶⁸“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

⁶⁹He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David

⁷⁰(as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),

⁷¹salvation from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us—

⁷²to show mercy to our ancestors
and to remember his holy covenant,

⁷³ the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

⁷⁴to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
and to enable us to serve him without fear

⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days” (Luke 1).

No doubt Zechariah was well acquainted with God’s Word and was remembering this passage of Scripture:

“He remembers his covenant forever,
the promise he made, for a thousand generations,
⁹ the covenant he made with Abraham,
the oath he swore to Isaac.

¹⁰ He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree,
to Israel as an everlasting covenant:

¹¹ “To you I will give the land of Canaan
as the portion you will inherit.” (Ps 105:8-11).

“for their sake he remembered his covenant
and out of his great love he relented” (Ps 106:45)

Before John was born, Mary went into the hill country of Judea to visit her cousin Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41). In a loud voice she exclaimed:

“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached

my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished (Luke 1: 42-45).

Elizabeth (wife of Zechariah) recognized Jesus as “her Lord” before he was born – evidently she knew the Scriptures that foretold his coming!!!
Mary responded:

⁴⁶ “And Mary said:

“My soul glorifies the Lord

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has been mindful

of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.

⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.

⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful

⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever,
just as he promised our ancestors.” (Luke 1)

This tells me Mary understood God’s covenant with Israel and the promise God made to Abraham and his descendants – notice the word “*forever*” in verse 35.

Again, reading portions of scripture like this I love to sit and ponder about all of it – visualizing being there listening to a teenager (Mary) talk about her miraculous conception and Elizabeth sharing how her husband became mute after doubting a message from God (through the angel, Gabriel) that she would conceive in her old age and bear a son. And God named both of their sons before birth. Imagine how Elizabeth felt when

she experienced being filled with the Holy Spirit and feeling the baby jump during the conversation!

This tells me God wants us to focus on His will – His plan for our lives. He did not reveal to them the fate of their sons – the hardships they would endure. They were to carry out His plan of redemption – God using John to prepare the way for Jesus who would die for the sins of the world. We are not born into this fallen world to live a cushioned life but we are to fight the battles we are called to fight. In these songs of Zachariah and Mary they are reminded of the covenant of Abraham – the everlasting covenant that Jesus mentions in the last supper to the disciples. And through Jesus sacrificing His life for you and me – we are blessed to be in that covenant also and we will inherit the world along with His chosen people – someday we'll see Mary and Elizabeth and perhaps listen to this story and hear Jesus and John's experience they had in the womb!!!! What an awesome thought!!!

God knows our needs – He knows what is best for us. He did not choose to inform these two mothers that the two children they would give birth to – one who would lose his head and the other hung on a cross – one preparing for the One who would bring salvation to the world – the One who makes it possible for you and me to live forever in a kingdom that will never end – a kingdom where there will be no more death – sickness , sorrow or sin – what a heritage we've been given – and just think – we will inherit the whole world – more on this later!!!!

When I was so eagerly looking for information of my ancestors it thrilled me to death to find any written records – especially those written in their Bibles. Sometimes I found pages that had been torn out that someone saved for the next generation. Most all older Bible's had blank pages for this – no doubt the old timers who read their Bibles took notice of how God was very meticulous with keeping records – we read them over and over throughout the word, ending with the twelve tribes named again in Rev 7 & 14. And the first book in the New Testament numbered the generations:

“Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abram to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ” (Matt. 1:17).

The genealogy of Jesus is recorded in Matt. 1:17-15 and Luke 3:23-31. Joseph and Mary are both descendants of David. Joseph through Solomon (Matthew's account) and Mary through Nathan (Luke's account). According to Henry Morris, Heli, mentioned in Matthew's account was a son-in-law (Defender's Study Bible, note on Luke 3:23). I

wonder how much the magi understood about the prophecy of Jesus and how they connected the star with Him.

“After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, ‘Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.’ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. ‘In Bethlehem in Judea, they replied, ‘for this is what the prophet has written: ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel” (Matt 2:1-6).

The teachers of the law quoted the above from Micah 5:2:

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of Judah,
out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times.”

Evidently King Herod knew the priests and teachers of the law knew Bible prophecy and just think - this prophecy from Micah had been given seven centuries earlier!!!! Once again, we see prophecy being fulfilled!!!

Evidently the Word of God was known well enough, generally speaking, that most knew salvation would come from the Jews (John 4:22; 8:31). Jesus instructed the apostles to go to the lost sheep of Israel (Matt 10:6). God’s covenant – the part that said the law would be written on the hearts of the people – was about to happen through the preaching of the kingdom (the rule of God). Jesus began preaching, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matt. 4:17).

Jesus’ ministry was to the Jews – He taught them all about Kingdom principles & he instituted the new covenant made to Israel and Judah (Jer. 31:31). It will be quoted later.

No doubt the disciples knew all about the New Covenant and understood the significance of it when Jesus said,

“I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God (Luke 22:15, 15).

“Likewise He also *took* the cup after supper, saying, “This cup *is* the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20).

Now we see where Jesus validated the New Covenant by sharing the bread and wine representing his body and blood with the apostles – a gift of thanksgiving all believers share today. This covenant continues to be made known throughout the N.T. and we’ll continue looking at the promises of God.

Throughout the N.T. we’re reminded about our ancestors. In Acts 3 many were flocking to Peter and John in the place called Solomon’s Colonnade. Peter said, “Men of Israel, why does this surprise you?” (3:12). He was talking about when the beggar was healed.

“Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus....” (3:13). Peter continued saying to them, “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed to you – even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people. “Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold those days. And you are heirs of the prophets and the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed. When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways (19-26).

Notice how the puzzle fits together. We’ve gone through the O.T. and read about God’s covenant and promises and now we’re reading in the N.T. where the apostles continue teaching about their ancestors and reminding them that the covenant made in Jeremiah 31 continues through them.

Jesus is talking to the Jews in Jerusalem when He says,

²⁴ “And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:24 NKJV).

I read this several times and my eyes kept focusing on the word “*until*.” Isn’t this saying Jerusalem will no longer be trampled on *after* the Gentile times are fulfilled? The apostle Paul speaks about the Gentiles:

“Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also...”
(Romans 3:29).

“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. ²⁶And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: ²⁷For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins” (Romans 11:25-27).

Doesn't this sound like Jerusalem (Israel) *will be* in God's plan in the future? The reason I made that comment is because some ask if prophecy about Israel has already been fulfilled.

Paul's quote above is from Isaiah 59:20, 21:

²⁰“And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. ²¹As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and forever.” _

Notice “*forever*” - personally, I believe this prophecy will be fulfilled at the end of the tribulation when the new covenant will be totally recognized.

In Luke 21 Jesus is talking about end times and after the quote in verse 24 he speaks of his return so it seems to me that the Gentile times will not be fulfilled until then and it *will be* in Israel!!!

The Defender's Bible had this to say in the footnote for Luke 21:24:

“Jerusalem, the great capital city of the Jews, continued to be under Gentile control until the Israelis recaptured it from the Arabs in 1967. In fact, the essential area of Jerusalem – the sacred site of its ancient temple – is still to this day under the control of the Muslim Arabs. Thus, the “times of the Gentiles” have not yet been fulfilled, nor will they be until Christ returns to reign there.”

There is so much that could be said about all the things Jesus came to accomplish but I'm focusing on Israel and how God continues to reach out to them in the NT. He sent his Son, Jesus to preach to the Jews first – salvation is from the Jews:

“You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22).

Jesus preached to the Jews and sent Jewish apostles to the Jews:

“He (Jesus) answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel” (Matt. 15:24).

“These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. ‘Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel” (Matthew 10:5-6).

Jesus, speaking to the Jewish leaders, said,

³⁷“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.³⁸ Look, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” (Matt 23:37).

Have you ever seen a mother hen gather her chicks? I don’t think many see this nowadays but when I was a little girl I visited my sister’s farm in the summer time and stayed for a week. There wasn’t a lot for me to do and I loved sitting on her front porch and watch the chickens. In the evening when it was getting dusk the mother hen would start clucking and while spreading her wings the chicks would come running and huddle under her wings. No one would know she was taking care of her chicks under those protective wings. What a loving site!!! When I read verses in the Bible like the one above I think of how Jesus longed to gather Israel like that.

Yes, Jesus loved the Jews whom He was sent to preach to and He is addressing the Jewish leaders (Israel), when He says:

“For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” (John 12:13).

Doesn’t this show that Jews will be present when this is said?

The Jewish apostles chosen by Jesus knew the O.T. well – they knew God made a covenant with Abraham (father of the Jews) a descendent of Shem (son of Noah) that through him and his seed (descendents) that He would be their God and the land of Canaan/Israel would be their passion forever.

The more I read in the N.T. the more I'm convinced that God does intend for the land of Israel to be inhabited forever and a remnant of Israel will be there – more on this later.

Paul, a Jew, who persecuted the followers of Jesus became a changed man after his experience on the Damascus road:

“Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

⁵“Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

⁷The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything” (Acts 9:1-9).

Paul became a believer and follower of Jesus Christ immediately and did exactly as Jesus told him and his vision was restored:

“Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, ¹⁹and after taking some food, he regained his strength” (Acts 9:17-19).

Have you ever had a Holy Spirit experience? In the past I thought the Holy Spirit was an “it” instead of “Who.” I had no idea of how powerful He really is! He is our teacher and we can learn from Him in three seconds what it would take a counselor many hours to teach. This was my experience one night at a meeting – I had been searching for the truth of God and was searching as I would for silver and gold – I wanted Him in my life more than anything. At this church meeting I heard a sermon about the love of Jesus

like I'd never heard before. When he finished he asked we all stand and sing the Lord's Prayer. In the middle of that prayer I felt like something was cleansing me from head to toe. Instantly I knew I had been looking for Truth in all the wrong places – I thought understanding the definition of certain doctrines like soul, hell, Trinity, and new heaven and new earth was "truth." After the Holy Spirit cleansed me I knew Jesus is the truth! Now, I understood John 14:3:

"I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me."

Instantly I began hearing (in my heart) the song "He was There all the Time" and "He Touched Me." Yes, He touched me that night and I've never been the same since!

The Holy Spirit speaks differently to God's children. Some have experiences like Paul – others grow in Him in a very quiet way. When Jesus ascended into heaven he promised to send the Comforter and there's nothing that can be compared to the baptism of Holy Spirit!

After apostle Paul came to know who Jesus was he became a changed man and had the love of Jesus in his heart and now had a better understanding of the O.T. prophecies of Him. He expresses his love for Israel saying,

"I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit — ²I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, ⁴the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. ⁵Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen. ⁶But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they *are* not all Israel who *are* of Israel, ⁷nor *are* they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called.'" ⁸That is, those who *are* the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. ⁹For this *is* the word of promise: 'At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son' (Ro 9:1-9).

Can you hear the deep anguish in Paul's words in the verse above? No doubt he has dealt with his deep sorrow of persecuting the Christians when he experienced the Holy Spirit and realized the Jewish Jesus was the Redeemer mentioned in the O.T. And now he longs to make Him known to

the unbelieving Jews and later sent to the Gentiles. Paul understood that Israel is adopted as sonship, but just because one is born a Jew he does not automatically earn eternal life – he still must accept Jesus, the Redeemer!

I can't imagine how much excitement there must have been among the Christian believers when Paul came to recognize who Jesus was – imagine the power in his testimony of how he was struck blind and heard the voice of Jesus giving instructions of going to Damascus. And what faith he must have needed to understand that he was now being sent to the Gentiles!!!

Paul's testimony became a mighty witness for the Lord. God uses our testimonies and many come to know Christ through them. I remember how shy I was about sharing mine until the Lord made it so clear to me that I *must* do it! I was always scared to death to speak in front of people! And when I was asked to share with a class at Wilmore Seminary I was scared to death but I felt like the Lord was speaking to my heart telling me He would be with me. That was a new beginning in ministry for me – something I never ever dreamed of! People started calling me and through the years I spoke in 50 churches (some several times a year) – seminary, college classes, conferences, many churches in Ecuador, five TV shows with John Ankerberg and two with Dave Reagan, plus writing two books. Yes, God can take ordinary people and do extraordinary things with them. He never calls us without equipping. I'm absolutely amazed that God allowed me to lead so many to Christ as well as mentor others into ministry. I could not have done any of it without Bill. Without God's call on him he would have never participated in over 30 years of ministry. What he has done all these years was completely out of character for him also!!!! But God used him in an amazing way that has touched hearts of many!!!

Have you shared your testimony? If you believe Jesus is the Son of God and have accepted Him as your Lord and Savior – you have a testimony! If people can see Jesus in you – how your life has changed and how the word of God has helped you – that speaks volumes to people – they will want what you have!!!!

Oops – I got side tracked, didn't I, but Paul's experience brought memories and I felt led to share a bit of my testimony. God used Paul to write more books of the Bible than anyone and he wrote a great deal about Israel and

certainly understood how God would deal with the falling away and yet had future hope for a Jewish remnant.

Like Jesus, Paul yearned for the Jewish people and even though many rejected Christ he knew a remnant would survive the great multitude of Israelites:

²⁷ Isaiah cries out concerning Israel “Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea,

only the remnant will be saved” (Ro 9:27).

And verse 29 says if God did not leave a remnant (descendants) they would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah:

²⁹ It is just as Isaiah said previously “Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah” (Ro 9:29).

The apostle Paul said “it is just as Isaiah said previously” – he was quoting from Isaiah:

¹⁷ “But Israel will be saved by the LORD

with an everlasting salvation;

you will never be put to shame or disgraced,

to ages everlasting” (Isa 45:17).

Making reference to what Paul said earlier about Israel when he said, “Theirs is the adoption to son ship” I wondered why they were called “adopted” if they were the chosen people from the beginning. I think it’s explained in Jeremiah 31:9:

“They will come with weeping; they will pay as I bring them back. I will lead them beside streams of water on a level path where they will not stumble, because I am Israel’s father, and Ephraim is my firstborn son.”

God is calling himself the *Father* of Israel – this means the nation of Israel is considered to be his adopted son. The word “firstborn” is used here and other places to mean “the right to rule.” He calls Ephraim his firstborn son but he was not born first – Manasseh was. Jesus is called the “firstborn” in Col. 1:15. King David is also called “firstborn” (Ps 89:27), but he wasn’t born first in his family.

God called Israel his firstborn son in Exo 4:22:

“Then say to Pharaoh, ‘This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son,’²³ and I told you, ‘Let my son go, so he may worship me.’ But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.”

And again in Hosea 11:1:

“When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.”

Paul wanted them to understand the things of God and now that he himself had a better understanding about the new covenant he wanted the Jews to know the difference in being under the law and having it written on their hearts:

²⁸A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. ²⁹No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God (Romans 2:28-29).

Paul had a heart for his people:

“Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved” (Romans 10:2).

Paul wanted them to understand God’s faithfulness and asked:

“What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? ²Much in every way! First of all, the Jews have been entrusted with the very words of God.

³What if some were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God’s faithfulness? ⁴Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar. As it is written:

“So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge” (Romans 3:1-4).

Did you realize it was the Jews who God entrusted with the very words of God? I’m not sure I had taken note of that before. *They* gave us the Bible!!!

Paul wanted them to understand that just because they descended from Israel they still need to be born again:

⁶“Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:

⁷Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

⁸That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

⁹For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son” (Romans 9:6-9).

Have you noticed how many times the covenant, the promises, and how they came into being – and how many times Abraham and his seed are mentioned in the N.T? I think the Lord wants us to understand that the Bible is like a puzzle that all comes together by the time you get to Revelation. And through the N.T. we understand how all these things come into being through the Jewish Jesus. Notice how Paul explains it:

¹³It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. ¹⁴For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, ¹⁵because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. ¹⁷As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

¹⁸Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” ¹⁹Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. ²⁰Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. ²²This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” ²³The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, ²⁴but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification Romans” (4:13-25).

The writer of Hebrews 6:9-12 speaks of inheriting the promises:

⁹“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

¹⁰For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

¹¹And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

¹²That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

We began this study talking about our heritage – everyone inherits something from their relatives - good or bad. It could be riches or meaningful legacies and sometimes just something so very small can touch our hearts every time we look at it. But God has made it possible for all of his children to become very wealthy – we will inherit the promises!!!

¹³“When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, ¹⁴saying, “I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.”^[a] ¹⁵And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.

¹⁶People swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. ¹⁷Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. ¹⁸God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. ¹⁹We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, ²⁰where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek” (Hebrews 6:13-20).

Are you doing the will of God? Sometimes I hear people of the world say they don't see any difference in the behavior of Christians than those in the world. This is very sad. We should do our best to walk the walk and talk the talk. We are not expected to be perfect but we need to practice what we preach. We will be judged by our good works – and richly rewarded:

³⁵“So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. ³⁶You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. ³⁷For, “In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay.” ³⁸And, “But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.” ³⁹But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved” (Hebrews 10:35-39).

These promises were made to Abraham before the law was given to Moses which was 430 years afterward and the law did not disannul the promise: ¹⁷“What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise” (Gal 3:17).

Doesn't this make you wonder why the law was ever given? It was added for transgressions:

“Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator” (Gal 3:19).

Was the law opposed to the promises?

“Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law” (Gal 3:21).

So how does the law and faith compare?

²⁴So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

²⁶“So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal 3:24-27).

And look at the next two verses which are very important for us to understand – I encourage you to read this carefully:

“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:28, 29).

Now you will understand what this study is all about – our Christian heritage joins the promise given to Abraham and we become His seed (adopted

descendants) because all believers belong to Christ. Yes, all are one! The N.T. is the testament (God's will) made out to us – yes – that's you and me and we will inherit the world!!! Doesn't that excite you? Doesn't that make you more appreciative of what Christ did on the cross for you? Our Father's love for His children made all this possible! More about this later.

Keep in mind the New Covenant (N.T.) continues and we still have unfulfilled prophecies. For example – the full number of Gentiles mentioned in Luke 21 where Jerusalem will be trampled until the Gentile times are fulfilled. Some things needed to happen first:

²⁵I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, ²⁶and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written:

“The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob and this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins” (Ro 11:25-27).

No doubt Paul had Isaiah 45:17 in mind when he wrote those verses:

“But Israel will be saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation; you will never be put to shame or disgraced to ages everlasting”

This is a prophecy of New Jerusalem when Jeremiah 31:34-40 will be fully realized when “no longer a man will teach his neighbor and all will know the Lord and the Lord I will forgive their sins.”

Once again Paul's desire for his natural brothers is expressed:

“Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. ²For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. ³Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” Ro 10:1-4).

“If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved(Ro 10:9)

Paul knew they would never be rejected:

“I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin” “So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by

grace.” ⁷What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain. The elect among them did, but the others were hardened...” (Ro 11:1, 5, 7).

Do you know anything about grafting trees and plants? We had a tree once that had been grafted but I’ve never seen it done. Evidently it’s been done for thousands of years because Paul uses this analogy to explain how the Jews and Gentiles are grafted in:

²⁵I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, ²⁶and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written:

“The deliverer will come from Zion;
he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

²⁷And this is my covenant with them
when I take away their sins.”

²⁸As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, ²⁹for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable. ³⁰Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, ³¹so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God’s mercy to you. ³²For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

³³Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out!

³⁴“Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?”

³⁵“Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay them?”

³⁶For from him and through him and for him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen (Romans 11:23-36).

When you read the whole Bible you will see that the nature of man has been the same since the beginning. Today we still experience the same emotions as did the people in ancient biblical days and God’s judgment, punishment, mercy and grace is demonstrated from beginning to end. We learn a lot about God’s character in his dealings with Israel. And due to Israel’s refusal

to see or hear the true revelation and will of God, he gave them a spirit of stupor:

“As it is written: “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day” (Ro 11:8).

Since the fall of man there has been good and evil. You’ve heard often that when a child begins to communicate – one of the first words they say is, “no.” We have to be taught right from wrong and sometimes we can be very stubborn. Children have to be disciplined and sometimes as adults as well. God disciplines us also. God knows what is best for us and has a reason for everything. He hardened the hearts of those who failed to believe but not forever:

¹¹“Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. ¹²But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!

¹³I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry ¹⁴in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. ¹⁵For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? ¹⁶If the part of the dough offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.

¹⁷If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, ¹⁸do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. ¹⁹You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.” ²⁰Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. ²¹For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

²²Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. ²³And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.²⁴After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature

were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!

All Israel Will Be Saved

²⁵I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, ²⁶and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written:

“The deliverer will come from Zion;
he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

²⁷And this is my covenant with them
when I take away their sins.”

²⁸As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, ²⁹for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable. ³⁰Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, ³¹so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now^[u] receive mercy as a result of God’s mercy to you. ³²For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

³³Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and^[u] knowledge of God!

How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out!

³⁴“Who has known the mind of the Lord?

Or who has been his counselor?”

³⁵“Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay them?”

³⁶For from him and through him and for him are all things.

To him be the glory forever! Amen” (Romans 11:11-36).

God does everything for a reason – remember when He directed Moses to go to Pharaoh in Egypt to let the Israelites go? God hardened Pharaoh’s heart so the glory of God could be demonstrated. He hardened Israel’s heart so the Gentiles could come in – and ultimately to enrich the whole world!! Notice how the Jews are the root of the tree and some branches are broken off but grafted back in. Israel will be blinded until the Gentiles have come in – when this happens ALL ISRAEL will be saved and note verse 26 (a quote

from Isaiah 59:20), the prophecy of the return of Jesus when godlessness is turned away from Jacob (Israel) and the covenant will be fulfilled when their sins are completely removed. This will take place at the end of the tribulation.

I continue giving you a lot of Scripture to read because I want you to get the points I'm trying to make from the Word so I hope you're reading all of it!

I would like for you to read Isaiah 59:20, 21 again regarding the prophecy quoted earlier:

“The Redeemer will come to Zion,
to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,”
declares the LORD.

²¹“As for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the LORD. “My Spirit, who is on you, will not depart from you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will always be on your lips, on the lips of your children and on the lips of their descendants—from this time on and forever,” says the LORD.

When I read the Bible I like to look up the references – that way you can read in the O.T. the prophecy and read it again in the N.T. Just think – what was written hundreds of years previously is either being fulfilled in the N.T. or they're quoting for the future fulfillment. No man could put together such a work. This is God's puzzle fitting into place as it happens. We should never take God's word lightly. If you do you'll miss out on knowing all about the promises in store for YOU!!!

We've talked a lot about the new covenant and I quoted it earlier but since the writer of Hebrews quotes it – let's look at it again:

⁶“But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.

⁷For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. ⁸But God found fault with the people and said:

“The days are coming, declares the Lord,
when I will make a new covenant

with the people of Israel

and with the people of Judah.

⁹It will not be like the covenant

I made with their ancestors

when I took them by the hand

to lead them out of Egypt,

because they did not remain faithful to my covenant,

and I turned away from them,

declares the Lord.

¹⁰This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel

after that time, declares the Lord.

I will put my laws in their minds

and write them on their hearts.

I will be their God,

and they will be my people.

¹¹No longer will they teach their neighbor,

or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,'

because they will all know me,

from the least of them to the greatest.

¹²For I will forgive their wickedness

and will remember their sins no more."^[a]

¹³By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear (Heb 8:7-13).

Notice verse six says the new covenant is superior to the old one and established on better promises. What are the better promises and what does this have to do with you and me? Remember – the new covenant (same as "New Testament") was established by Jesus Christ, "my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28), and through Him includes the Gentiles as well as the children of Israel... ⁵¹"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." "May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Heb 13:20).

No doubt you have taken communion many times and continue to do so. Taking the “fruit of the vine” and bread became an unforgettable symbol of His shed blood, just as the bread represented His broken body. This last meal of the Lord continues to be celebrated by Christians. Often 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 is quoted:

²³For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” ²⁶For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Hebrews 9:15 sums it up: “¹⁵For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.”

Did you notice it saying “receive the promise of eternal inheritance”? That’s for you and me!!!! When we receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior – we receive a new life and all the promises – forever! And our loving Lord guarantees it:

¹³“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory” (Eph 1:13-14).

Most of us like to plan our future and our future in this life does not end at death – it continues and the “better promises” of the new covenant will continue and be fully recognized “at that time” and there will no longer be a need to teach our neighbor about the Lord for all will know Him!!!! Can you imagine what life will be like in the new heaven and new earth when all will know Him and live the life – a perfect life where there will be no more sickness, sorrow or death?

We will not have to worry about impurity being in the kingdom and we should take these verses seriously in our walk with the Lord:

“¹Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children ²and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

³But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. ⁴Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. ⁵For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.^[a] ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. ⁷Therefore do not be partners with them” (Eph 5:1-7).

Our new life in Christ should look different from the world as we focus on good advice:

¹⁰so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,¹¹being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, ¹²and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you^[a] to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. ¹³For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col 1:10-14).

Colossians 3:22-25 reassures us:

“²²Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. ²³Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. ²⁵Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.”

The above verse mentions work – have you ever thought about doing jobs as doing it unto the Lord? My dad taught us to take pride in everything we did and I watched him live this throughout his life. I didn't realize it was scripture but if we work with all our heart as though we were working for the Lord – would it make a difference in how we view it? The old timers - the generation which is called “the greatest generation that ever lived” were very adamant about working hard and not taking anything for free. I remember once as a little girl a woman coming to our door asking if we had any jobs she could do. She wanted to earn enough money to pay for bus fare to a nearby town to visit her sick aunt. Can you imagine that today?

People back then would refuse money without working for it! That's when we had a culture that lived (for the most part) godly values.

Yes, we can look forward to our inheritance that will never perish:

³"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Peter 1:3-5).

Perhaps you've been asking yourself, "Just what are the benefits of the new covenant?" You should be interested because if you belong to Jesus you are in this covenant - the Defender's Bible gives the definition:

1. God's laws will become inner principles that will enable people to delight in doing his will (Ezek. 36:26, 27); Ro 8:2-4 v. 10b)
2. God and his people will have intimate fellowship
3. Sinful ignorance of God will be removed forever
4. Forgiveness of sins will be an everlasting reality v. 12 and will remember their sins no more (Jer 31:31-34; Heb 10:17)
5. Abraham and offspring will inherit the world (Ro 4:13-25)
6. Receive a kingdom (Heb 12:28)
7. Receive the promise of the Spirit (Gal 3:14)
8. Belong to Christ – are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise (Gal 3:29)
9. Become sons – receive full rights of sons – receive the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the spirit that calls out "Abba, Father (Gal 4:4-7)

God's laws will become inner principles that enable His people to delight in doing his will – let's look at these verses again:

²⁷"And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. ²⁸Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God" (Ezek 36:26-27).

¹³"All your children will be taught by the LORD, and great will be their peace" (Isa 54:13).

This new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31 quoted in Hebrews 8 is not the covenant that became obsolete mentioned in verse 13:

“By calling this covenant ‘new,’ he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and ageing will soon disappear.”

This is referring to the covenant made with Moses that contained the law in Deuteronomy – if you read the whole chapter of Hebrews 8 it becomes obvious. As we have seen over and over the covenant made with Abraham is everlasting. Notice verse 10: “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord...” Take note “after that time” is with future Israel:

“From this man’s descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised” (Acts 13:23).

And notice that verse 11 says “they will all know me” – that is future Israel, a prophecy of Isaiah 54:13:

“All your sons will be taught by the LORD, and great will be your children’s peace.” This will be realized in full as described in Revelation 21.

Hebrews is called the “faith” chapter because it is a history of the ancient’s faith in God. You can understand the importance of having faith as it says in Hebrews 1:1, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” It mentions the faith of Abraham and the promise – again – the promise – of our inheritance – the covenant is so important that God chose to mention it numerous times in the N.T.

Have you ever thought of how many promises were made through the prophets that they did not see in their lifetime – I wonder if they ever grew weary or began to doubt. Hebrews 11:13 says,

“All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.” Verse 15 says, “If they had been thinking of a country they had left, they would have opportunity to return (16) Instead, they were longing for a better country – a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.”

I believe they had faith and knew they would receive the promises in the future. Is your faith strong? Whenever I feel weak in the spirit, feel weary, have doubts and discouragement, I'm always encouraged by reading the word of God. We can change our thoughts of discouragement and negative attitudes by conforming our mind to God's thoughts.

Now, we Gentiles can appreciate being grafted into that olive tree! We are now one with Israel and in the new covenant. Grace has made this possible as Paul explains:

“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

²Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. ⁴In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. ⁶This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

⁷I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. ⁸Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, ⁹and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. ¹⁰His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹²In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.”

So the Gentiles (together with Israel), as member together of one body are sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus become heirs to the inheritance and promises of God through adoption!!! (Eph 3:1-12).

This new covenant is an everlasting covenant. Hebrews 13:20,21 says,

“May the God of peace who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen”

Notice how Ephesians explains how Jew and Gentile are reconciled through Christ:

¹¹Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands) — ¹²remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

¹⁹Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²²And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” (Eph 2:11-22).

As far as the law and promise goes, this reference is given:

¹⁴“He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

¹⁵Brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. ¹⁶The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,”^[a] meaning one person, who is Christ. ¹⁷What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. ¹⁸For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

¹⁹Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator. ²⁰A mediator, however, implies more than one party; but God is one.

²¹Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. ²²But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

²³Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. ²⁴So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian ²⁶So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.²⁸There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal 3:14-29).

This goes back to the covenant given to Isaac (Abraham's son) – the everlasting covenant when God promised to be our God forever!!!! Do you trust God for this in your life? One of the most important things we can pray about in this present life is trusting God 24/7. Can you truly believe that you will be among those who will inherit the world?

“It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world but through the righteousness that comes by faith.” For if those who live by the law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression. Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring – not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all” (Ro 4:13-16).

Now we have most of the puzzle put together but we still need to look for the pieces that bring us to the end – the last book of the Bible, Revelation. Then we'll see the big picture! When we take note of how God chose and used Israel we don't want to think He was showing favoritism among the people because He always made provisions for strangers to come and be accepted. A world needs order and He chose Israel to bring it to all people. Now we've come to Revelation and we find how all these promises will come true and receive our inheritance and live with Him in the new heavens and new earth. We started in Genesis naming the twelve tribes of Israel and now we see them named again in Revelation 7:4-12:

⁴ Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.

⁵ From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed,

from the tribe of Reuben 12,000,

from the tribe of Gad 12,000,

⁶ from the tribe of Asher 12,000,

from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000,

from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000,

⁷ from the tribe of Simeon 12,000,

from the tribe of Levi 12,000,

from the tribe of Issachar 12,000,

⁸ from the tribe of Zebulon 12,000,

from the tribe of Joseph 12,000,

from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.

Most prophecy teachers believe they will be sealed by the Holy Spirit and, being followers of Jesus Christ, will preach to the world during the seven-year tribulation, and will be fully protected by the Lord. After they are named, the great multitude is mentioned:

“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”

¹¹ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying:

“Amen!

Praise and glory

and wisdom and thanks and honor
and power and strength
be to our God forever and ever.
Amen!” (Rev 7:9-12).

This great multitude of people who come out of the great tribulation is probably the result of the preaching by the 144,000.

This number is mentioned again in Revelation 14:1:

“Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads.”

Have you read the book of Ezekiel – it is full of prophecy and I believe this verse will reach its fulfillment when these events in Revelation begin to take place:

²⁴“For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. ²⁵I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. ²⁸Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God” (Ezek 36:14-28).

As you know part of the temple wall in Jerusalem still stands – no doubt you’ve seen it on TV where people go and place written prayers in the cracks of the wall and often you’ll see Jews praying as they rock in motion. We were there and put prayers in the cracks. The Jews will build a new temple according to Bible prophecy - in fact I saw something on Facebook the other day about plans being in place. When we were in Israel we visited the “Temple Institute” and saw many items that have already been made that will be used in it. We saw the Eastern gate that has been sealed since Jesus walked through it. Take note of these prophecies in Ezekiel:

“The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple. (6) Then I heard Him speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me. (7) And He said to me, “Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles

of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. No more shall the house of Israel defile My holy name, they nor their kings, by their harlotry or with the carcasses of their kings on their high places. (8) “When they set their threshold by My threshold, and their doorpost by My doorpost, with a wall between them and Me, they defiled My holy name by the abominations which they committed; therefore I have consumed them in My anger. (9) “Now let them put their harlotry and the carcasses of their kings far away from Me, and I will dwell in their midst forever” (Ezek 43:5-9).

“Then He brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces toward the east, but it *was* shut. ² And the LORD said to me, “This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the LORD God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut. ³ *As for the prince, because he is the prince, he may sit in it to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gateway, and go out the same way*” (Ezek 44:1-3).

The Defender’s Bible had this to say in the footnote for 44:2: “The LORD, the God of Israel, once entered in by it – that is, the Creator, Jehovah, the God of Israel, had become a man, that He might actually enter the temple through the East gate, the gate through which Ezekiel had just seen the *shekinah* glory come into the house. In the new temple, the gate will be open again, and the God/man, the King of Kings, Jesus Christ will enter thereby.”

Can you imagine this scene? Do you suppose you and I will witness this in our glorified bodies? We have so much to look forward to in the next life!!!!

God’s promises will be fulfilled in the coming millennium, after the “time of Jacob’s trouble:”

“How awful that day will be!

No other will be like it.

It will be a time of trouble for Jacob,

but he will be saved out of it.

⁸“‘In that day,’ declares the LORD Almighty,

‘I will break the yoke off their necks

and will tear off their bonds;

no longer will foreigners enslave them.

⁹Instead, they will serve the LORD their God

and David their king,

whom I will raise up for them” (Jer 30:7-9).

This will be during the “great tribulation”:

“For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again” (Matt. 24:21).

At the climax of that terrible time, the people of Israel still living will all believe on Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him:

“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son” (Zech 12:10). In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness” (Zach 13:1).

At the same time, believers from both Israel and the Gentiles have been made one in Christ and the new covenant will become applicable to both.

“Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands) — ¹²remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit” (Eph 2:11-18).

The “new covenant,” or New Testament,” became applicable also to Gentile believers:

“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt 26:28).

“For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant” (Heb 9:15).

“...to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word

than the blood of Abel” (Heb 12:24).

“Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matt 26:27-29).

I know I keep repeating myself when I say, “I’m amazed at how many times the scriptures keep referring back to Abraham and the promise God made to him – but here we have come all the way through the Bible and are now in Hebrews and here is one of the writers recognizing the same promise:

“For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. (13) All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. (14) People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own (15) If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. (16) Instead, they were longing for a better country – a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them” (Heb 11:10, 13, 14, 15, 16).

Abraham did not grow weary waiting for God’s promise – instead he trusted God. The passage above is speaking of the “heavenly Jerusalem” and note this one:

” But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, (Heb 12:22). “God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect” (Heb 11:40).

This city is mentioned again:

“For here we do not have an enduring city but we are looking for the city that is to come” (Heb 13:14).

“I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Rev 21:2-4).

“One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹² It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. ¹³ There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. ¹⁴ The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵ The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. ¹⁶ The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia^[a] in length, and as wide and high as it is long. ¹⁷ The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits^[b] thick.^[c] ¹⁸ The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. ¹⁹ The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.^[d] ²¹ The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.

²² I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. ²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. ²⁷ Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev 21:9-27)

I hope you’re reading all the verses I’ve inserted because when you get God’s word in you – you have the truth. Once when our granddaughter was visiting we read these verses and drew a cubic of New Jerusalem and talked about how it would measure from KY to Texas and would be that high also. Then we looked up all the colors in the dictionary and found a crayon nearest the color and colored the foundation. She loved to learn and we had a good time discussing it. Can you imagine living in this? Someday you will when you receive your inheritance:

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world’ (Matt 25:34).

When Jesus returns He will come to the Mount of Olives:

“On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south” (Zec 14:4).

From this I conclude that Israel was and always will be promised to Abraham, his descendants and all those who belong to Christ:

“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:29).

And we will inherit the world! “It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith” (Ro 4:13).

Have you ever studied eschatology? There are several different views. Biblical interpretation has varied through the ages. Personally I believe God had a purpose for writing the Bible in such a way that we have different opinions. After all – He made each of us different – none have the same finger print among the billions of people in the world. And every time you read certain verses in the Bible you see something you didn’t understand before – that’s another way it’s different from other histories. I’ve heard some people talk about how certain words would seem to be illuminated and open their heart about something special. That is the Holy Spirit making that possible.

Some people ask, “Why are there so many different denominations among the churches?” I was raised in a religion that believed they were the only ones who had the correct interpretation and all believed exactly alike all over the world in that group – yet when the leaders changed their interpretation of certain Scriptures, no longer teaching the previous view, that meant all the followers had to agree with the current view and disagree with a past view. Naturally if thousands of people in one religion believe exactly alike at the time it’s being taught – this tells me all are following one person or a group of people who have taken authority to dictate what they are to believe.

When I left that group and began to research all the different church denominations, I learned that the one “teaching” all of them accepted was the

fact that Jesus was the Son of God and He was the one way, truth, and life – His words:

“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’ (Jo 14:6).

People are different and cultures change but through the 2,000 years since Jesus came the Church has weathered many storms but always taught the death, burial, resurrection and return of Jesus. Jesus said we would go through many trials and tribulations but His church will always prevail:

“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matt. 16:18).

When Jesus was born even time was split from B.C. to A.D. Our calendars were adjusted accordingly - most people on earth have heard of Jesus. And when He was on earth and was teaching His disciples, He always glorified the Father and reminded them what Exodus 3:14 said,

“God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.’” Jesus referred to this verse in John 8:58, “‘I tell you the truth,’ Jesus answered, ‘before Abraham was born, I am!’” After Jesus said that the unbelieving Jews threw stones at him because they knew He was claiming to be God.

Yes, Jesus and all of the authors of the N.T. quoted from the O.T. Luke said,

“Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Luke 24:27).

Every story in the Bible whispers His name, even the hard stories because they reveal the comprehensive brokenness of our world and our need for a Rescuer.

Acts 3:19-26 reminds them of things said in the O.T.:

“¹⁹Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, ²⁰and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. ²¹Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. ²²For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. ²³Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people. ²⁴“Indeed,

beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days. ²⁵ And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed. ²⁶ When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”

Notice how Peter refers to the prophets in Acts chapter 2 when he stood up with the eleven and addressed the crowd of Jews - all living in Jerusalem:

(21) “He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.”

Beginning in (24) he tells how all the prophets from Samuel on foretold these days. Then in Acts 3:24, 25, 26 he tells them:

“they are heirs of the prophets and covenant God made with their fathers...” “ He said to Abraham, ‘through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.” (26) “When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”

No doubt Luke is saying that the Jews (Israel) have *inherited* what God promised Abraham and his descendants, the better promise, meaning Jesus made it possible for all to have eternal life in the future kingdom in Israel and all sins forgiven.

Now that we’ve come from Genesis to Revelation we can see how the first prophecy, recorded in the Bible has been fulfilled: (the Lord is speaking to the serpent) – added words of explanation are mine:

“I will put enmity (animosity) between you (devil) and the woman (Eve) and between your (Satan) offspring (or seed) and hers (Eve) he (Christ) will crush your (Satan) head and you (Satan) will strike his (Jesus) heel.” (Gen 3:15).

The offspring or seed of the woman was Christ and this was fulfilled in Galatians 3:16,

“The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed.” The Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed, meaning one person, Who is Christ.”

Jesus’ heel was struck by Satan at the cross but the head of Satan was crushed because through shedding His blood He paid the ransom. After Jesus died he descended into hades and set the captives free taking them to heaven

(Eph 4:8). He conquered death and when believers die now – we also go to be with Him. The new covenant that Jesus instituted was put into practice and we see in Revelation how it will be ultimately fulfilled in the future kingdom. Jesus concluded Revelation through the vision He gave John saying, “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen” (Rev 20:20, 21).

The last piece of the puzzle is now in place and we can look at the big picture and give a big sigh!!! Has it made any sense to you? Hopefully you read all of this and when I say “all” I’m referring to all the scriptures I’ve quoted – I hope you can understand the importance of our Christian heritage with the Jewish connection. By understanding this – it will give you a sense of knowing where you came from and where you’re going; meanwhile – how will you live your life from now to death? As I said in my dedication, I’m writing this primarily to my grandchildren (including our “adopted” grandchild – not legally but through love). I have some very special friends who I might share it with and, of course, hope my own children might read it.

When you think about the question I asked about how to live your life, and the changing culture we’re living in – think about how you would feel and what you would do if suddenly someone set a fire somewhere and no one was putting it out. And then you heard that more fires had been set and some people start talking about how pretty they are – and then the fires begin to spread and people get on TV and speak about the rights people have to set those fires and we should love them! They can’t help setting fires – they have this urge and must do it! You know what’s right – you know these fires will spread and harm people – but if you speak out against this practice – you are considered to be judgmental and a Pharisee. What should you do? Should you join them – take a stand and speak against it – or maybe carry a few buckets of water and put out some of the fires – what should one do? The apostles in Jesus day, living in a Pagan culture had to make decisions like this – perhaps you can read how they handled them and live accordingly.

There’s an old song, “Onward Christian soldiers” written back in the day when times were bad here in the states. You’ve seen the old cowboy movies how men visited the saloons, drank and gambled. This was true and history tells about how the thieves and gangs took over. When the government sent in

regulators they killed them. It was the great awakening that changed things and churches began to spring up on every corner! "Onward Christian Soldiers" became famous and Christians took a stand passing laws against such things. Maybe that's the way we need to be again and pray about how we can defend the faith against the culture of the day. You have a rich heritage – how will you take a stand? Reading through the Bible we see how the Israelites walked with God – then turn away – walk again and fall again. Two generations ago Christians fought a spiritual battle and passed laws against gambling because men were losing everything they owned in those saloons and other places. Christians fought against alcoholism and prostitution for the same reason and now we have drugs to battle against along with immorality – and it's getting worse! And the world seems to have gone sex crazy – are we facing another Sodom and Gomorrah? Yet, in spite of all this we still hold to the promise that His Church will always be here so I encourage you to live as though the end would come tomorrow and plan as though it was a thousand years away. Keep the faith and look forward to a new heaven and new earth where we'll all live together *forever and forever*. AMEN